1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

842 183 quite explicit, and married couples are supposed to want children. Those few women who admitted to me, confidentially, not wanting children had very high divorce records, while all others conformed to expectations when asked specifically concerning their desire for offspring.

842 Traditionally the Kanuri believe that conception results from simultaneous orgasm during sexual intercourse. This information I got from older men who do not, however, know in any detail when or how often such an event actually takes 843 place. Instead they reason that it has occurred when their wife reports a pregnancy. [842] When a woman is over one month late in a menstrual cycle (a few said forty-five days) conception is suspected, and she begins to buy charms on the market to safeguard a normal gestation. During this initial period the husband and wife, ideally at least, should not speak of the pregnancy to anyone until at least the second menstrual period has been missed, and then only to their very close friends and relatives. Such talk, indeed any excess conversation about the pregnancy, is believed to be dangerous to the course and development of a normal pregnancy. Even during the later stages just before birth only very cryptic references are made by the parents when they refer to the coming event. Pregnancy, like a number of other occa- [984] sions in one's lifetime, is considered a very fragile time, a time when an individual is vulnerable to maliciousness from humans or spirits. Because it is difficult to know about such maliciousness, until after its effects are felt, it is better to avoid mentioning the susceptible circumstances.

[833] Sexual intercourse is continued throughout pregnancy since the Kanuri believe that such activity makes for an easier labor at birth by keeping the passage open and providing fluids for the child and the mother.

Although the Kanuri recognize the pregnancy period of nine months, the woman continues her normal work until the lying-in period is signaled by labor. On the other hand exceptions to the nine-month period occur, and some women claim to have been pregnant for years although no outward sign is visible. This latter condition is referred to as *bənji*, that is to say an embryo that will not come out of the womb. A woman may miss a menstrual cycle once and then become convinced that she has conceived. If her conviction holds she may, after menstruating again, diagnose the condition as a *bənji*. Missing a menstrual period, however, is not absolutely necessary for the diagnosis. Women who spoke of having *bənji* felt that any woman could have one, but they also agreed that in their experience the woman was usually older and either had not given birth for a long time or had had a completely infertile marriage history. Certainly many Kanuri women seem to be barren, and this cultural belief must help to assuage the disappointment of a hopeful but sterile woman. It may also serve to alleviate the loss of womanly role for an older woman who sees herself being replaced in her reproductive functions by her husband's younger wives.

Birth

844 When the woman is about to give birth, she is assisted by her own mother if she is in the vicinity, or her mother-in-law if she is living with her husband's family, and sometimes by a specialist in midwifery. There are stories told about

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

which he hopes are less important. Furthermore, as in any bureaucracy, standards and their enforcement change through time, often as a result of changing personnel at the top. A new council member may have become interested in school latrines and suddenly start forcing compliance with the rules about such things. Failure to do so or to hear about the stringency with which the old previously unimportant policies are now being enforced could bring trouble to the district head who failed to comply. This is why information about policy and the cultivation of powerful friends in the central government is so important for the district head.

Before leaving the rural area a word should be said about adjudication. All leaders in the Bornu political system adjudicate disputes, and the political hierarchy itself serves as an appeals court system. Thus a peasant can take his dispute with a neighbor to his bullama (hamlet or ward head), who may decide to take the case up to the lawan (village area head), who in turn may decide to take the case to the district head. The district head may further decide to send the case over to the district court, and, if necessary, the district court can send the case into the capital city, to the court of the chief alkali of Bornu (chief judge's court). People can go directly to the judge's or district court, and in the city many do. Even with very serious cases like murder which must go into the central court in the city, the people taking the murderer into the city court most often go up the political hierarchy reporting the case each time they see another official even though there is no adjudication, thus giving recognition to their political leaders rather than going directly to a higher court.

Cases are tried by a combination of Muslim law and local custom. The chief or judge listens to the case, and if three witnesses swear for one side in a dispute but not the other, then the side whose witness has sworn wins the case. If no one swears evidence or too many people swear on both sides, then the judge listens while his assistant in the court interrogates the parties involved. The judge, whoever he may be, then makes a decision. Very often the interrogation itself tends to move the evidence towards one side in a dispute or another. Usually if a crowd gathers, one can see by simply listening to the crowd which side of the court case is winning the argument. On the whole decisions are just unless there have been previous and difficult relations between the adjudicator and any of the parties concerned. Swearing evidence in a court is called "eating the Koran"; that is to say, a person must swear on the holy book. If he tells a lie, it is believed that his hand will shrivel and he will die of horrible diseases. This belief is widespread and it is genuinely feared that the traditionally implied consequences of lying in court are in fact quite true.

The Organization at the Center

In Maiduguri at the eastern end of the royal plaza is the palace of the Shehu, flanked on one side by the mosque and on the other by the official residence of the Waziri or chief minister of the emirate. The Shehu is the formal head of government. All measures, policies, appointments, made within the state are in his name; titles are granted at official investiture ceremonies carried on in the royal palace and he is the formal leader of the religious community of the state. This is em-

586 779 ing, "I divorce you," or, "The marriage is over." When a husband divorces his wife she leaves his house and goes to the house of her iuwali. A wife cannot divorce her husband, but, as the Alkali of Geidam phrased it, "The power of a woman is in the law; the law helps her." As an example, he noted that if a woman hits her husband, that is nothing, but if a man hits his wife, the marriage can be dissolved by an Alkali. She can ask the court to grant her a divorce if her husband is impotent, and therefore not a real husband. If he disputes the accusation the court may actually attempt to ascertain whether it is true or not, by witnessing whether the husband is capable of having intercourse with his wife.

A man may divorce his wife twice, and take her back within the three months and ten day waiting period, or at any time after that. After the third time, he is forbidden from taking her back until she has married and divorced another man. If they continue to live together after the third divorce, they are living in a state of sin called dəi for which the punishment is hell. A man may divorce his wife only once and say dəla to her, and the marriage is dissolved, just as if he had divorced her for the third time.

When a man divorces his wife, friends and neighbors frequently come to attempt to arbitrate their dispute (shoio). The husband may finalize the separation by saying, "Yanyi" (She is like my mother). Having said this, the marriage is ended, and the husband may not take back his wife unless he pays a fine

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586 779 681 of sixty bowls of millet. If he pays the fine they may resume living together as a married couple; if he does not pay, living together is haram (forbidden), equivalent to living with one's mother as one's wife. If, in the course of a quarrel, the husband calls his wife "Yanyi", he must pay the fine or the marriage is dissolved.

586 779 [692] It would seem that the husband's abilities to dissolve a marriage are much greater than those of his spouse. The wife, however, has many ways open to her for bringing about a divorce, and, as was noted above, the law protects her rights. If the wife merely dislikes her husband and wants a divorce from him, he may refuse unless she pays him a sum of money. Since the husband loses the luwaliram when he divorces his wife, he will demand that she return the luwaliram to him (and some times more in addition), if it is she who wishes to bring about an end to the marriage. Amicable divorces of this type, where it is the wife who seeks to initiate the divorce, are brought about by an agreement concerning the luwaliram payment. Should the husband refuse to divorce his wife, she may take to disobeying him, and cease to prepare his meals. In that case he may take her to court, and unless she has a reasonable claim against her husband (for example, that he beats her), the court will order her to swear on the Koran that she will behave properly in the future. Oaths taken on the Koran are thought of in very serious terms, and are not lightly broken. It is thought that a wife who has sworn on the Koran and who breaks her oath will die for swearing falsely.

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constantly. Frequently the respective merits of each were mentioned. A Talaka states, "A horse doesn't go fast, while a bicycle goes fast. The horse has more prestige (dareja)." Another Talaka says, "In town you can go far, deliver messages and return very rapidly with a bicycle. But for strolling through the town a horse is better. You wear a large gown (kulugu) and big pants--it's pleasant (kali)."

The prestige of the horse is reflected in several of the answers to the question: do you know how to ride a bicycle? Two individuals specifically indicated that although they knew how to ride, they did not ride a bicycle as it was not dignified (see Table XIX). Turning to the question of which one would rather have, a horse or a bicycle, two groups (Kabuna and Craftsmen) reveal themselves as particularly conservative and overwhelmingly choose the horse. It has already been noted that the horse is of particular importance to the Kabuna. Their reasons for selecting the horse are apparent. On the other hand, the Aristocracy are also closely tied to ceremonial activities involving the horse, yet they are the only group in which more choose the bicycle (3) than the horse (2). It would appear that the Aristocracy are in no doubt about the prestige due them, and lean more strongly towards some of the other factors which favor the bicycle.

Several other measures concerning the adoption of Western items were attempted. Among them were smoking cigarettes and drinking beer. Drinking alcoholic beverages, including Euro-

*177 276 273 *[784] European-style beer, is forbidden to strict Moslems. Smoking cigarettes is not forbidden by religious edict, but is generally avoided except by adolescents and young men. In place of cigarettes, and serving much the same function, all Kanuri chew kola nuts. It can be seen from Table XXII that only eight individuals smoke cigarettes; two others smoked in the past but have given it up. Only three individuals admit to drinking beer, while three others did drink in the past. Those who smoke or drink can be found dispersed throughout six of the groups, with no significant clustering of cases appearing in any one group. In two groups, however, no individuals are to be found [792] who either smoke or drink. These are the Koranic Malams and [441] the Canteen Operators. The reasons for the strictness of the Koranic Malams is obvious. The Canteen Operators are somewhat different in their motivation. They would appear to adhere closely to traditional norms in these areas.

*177 291 *829 The last items involving Western material goods concern the wearing of European-made shoes and European-style trousers, presented in Table XXIII. Most of the individuals in the sample have worn European-made shoes at one time or another, and a number of others state that although they do not have them they would wear them if they had shoes. Only seven individuals categorically state that they would not wear European- [792] made shoes, and these appear in four groups: Koranic Malams, *[634] Kabuna, Craftsmen, and Talaka. The general attitude against *[463] wearing European-style trousers, however, is much stronger. *[565]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 276]